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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that in a postmodern perspective, any curriculum is an expression of epistemology. It is a way of knowing, and a culturally oriented language. As such, curriculum is a manifestation of human consciousness, and it should comprehend in its scope the varieties of languages expressing races, genders, and social classes. Within a postmodern perspective, the curriculum becomes a means toward awakening consciousness, reaching the personal within the social, and respecting the humble in the fight against hegemonies. As empowerment lies upon sociocritical as well as personal insights, raising consciousness becomes the goal of postmodern education. The paper describes how, despite postmodern education's generous integrated goals, it may lead to new perversions because of mass networking and links to finance. The attempts to generalize politics of meaning through education may well submit the ideals of meaningfulness to the language of adminis"traitors" at a time when education is deeply rooted in economics and trade values. The paper focuses on the emergence of consciousness studies in the academic world. (LMI)

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Restricting Meaning or Expanding Consciousness: A Premodern View on Postmodern Curricula

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In a postmodern perspective, any curriculum is an expression of epistemology. It is a way of knowing, and a culturally-oriented language. As such, curriculum is a manifestation of human consciousness, and it should comprehend in its scope the varieties of languages expressing races, genders, and social classes. Within a postmodern perspective, the curriculum becomes a means towards awakening consciousness, reaching the personal within the social, and respecting the humble in the fight against hegemonies. As empowerment lies upon sociocritical as well as personal insights, raising consciousness becomes the goal of postmodern education.

In this paper, I will show how, despite of its generous integrated goals, postmodern education may lead to new perversions because of mass-networking and its links to finance. The attempts at generalizing politics of meaning through education may well submit the ideals of meaningfullness to the language of administ*raitors* at a time when education is so deeply rooted in economics and trade values. The case that I will analyze is the emergence of consciousness studies in the academic world.

Case study: Consciousness in the academic world

In June-July 1994, along with 24 other invited scholars from various disciplines, I took part in the work of the Academy of Consciousness Studies organized at Princeton University by members of the Faculty of Engineering and the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Laboratory (PEAR). There, experiments with random events generators tend to show that those random machines can be influenced by individual consciousness. Consciousness is analyzed in those laboratories as a physical force, and as a physical construct rather than a psychological one. But if this knowledge begins to be used in the field of education, where will it lead us, and how will it be interpreted and used for ?

Here, I will not attempt to offer explanations, plausible or implausible, for the sometimes astonishing "effects of consciousness" on random generators. Rather, I would like to present my personal reflections on the educational implications of research into consciousness, in light of the recent proliferation of such research in various learned disciplines: for the last two years, meetings were held on this topic in most ivy league universities. New journals are born, and the question of consciousness is now raised in curricular terms. Indeed, schools of consciousness studies are opening their doors in diverse academic institutions.

The aims of the Academy of Consciousness Studies organized at Princeton University were of at least two kinds: research and educational. The research-related aim was to establish a coordinated network of scholarly research on consciousness across numerous disciplines. The educational aim was to provide participants with information, training, and conceptual models that allow for an integration of the subject as knower and the disciplinary objects of knowledge. The integration of the objective and the subjective would seem indeed to have major social significance, holding as it does the potential to mitigate the

dichotomization of science and ethics, industry and ecology, economy and health, professional life and private life.

Given these aims, their potential implementation calls for careful examination. Indeed, their implementation should not be envisaged without prior analysis of the relation between education and research as well as of the relation between ideal aims and the logic of implementation (Tochon, 1993).

Consciousness studies and the paradox of educational change

Two constants of research on educational change over the last decade bear out this last remark. The **first constant** is that **the transformation of research results into instructional models occurs through what I will call an instructional transfer**. Instructional transfer entails a loss of complexity and a reduction to a doctrinal model (or set of such models) of the reality articulated by research, with the usual potential for doctrine to become dogma (Chevallard, 1985).

It is especially important to bear this principle in mind at a time when recent successes in scholarly consciousness studies are leading some universities to consider creating faculties of consciousness studies. Instructional modelling--the devising of schemas for teaching subject matter--is based on a principle of homogenizing knowledge. The internalization of an instructional model bounds subsequent research within a prior doctrine. This means that if consciousness research is to lead to education, it will be necessary to examine closely the types of instructional transfer used. Consciousness studies will avoid dogmatism only if founded on the ability to critique the models yielded by research and if conducted in the spirit of the search for integrated meaning making. In other words, when the transfer of knowledge does not contain the leaven that insures its own critique, it soon begins to crystallize into doctrine and loses its meaning-making content. This is the process by which the loftiest content is made banal and forced into rigid formulas, making it easier to convey in training.

The **second constant** to be observed in research into educational change has to do with the relationship between ideal goals and the logic of implementation. **Employing a top-down model for the implementation of the goals and aims of an educational system leads to the partial betrayal of those goals and aims by the very process of implementation**. Institutionalizing "Consciousness Studies" would represent a major innovation. Current research on institutional change suggests that directive, top-down research merely perpetuates the previous system, because those involved in the innovation have no time to tie their new knowledge in with their prior knowledge closely enough to grasp its practical implications. Researchers into educational change are currently of the belief that the considerable sums spent on educational innovation over the past two decades were largely wasted (Huberman, 1993). All the effort was invested in preparing the innovations; no resources were left over for "after-sales service." Experience showed the programs and

teaching materials designed were to some extent inadequate; as well, teachers were insufficiently trained for the change. Current thinking is that change can succeed only if it emerges out of carefully thought-out, extended, and ongoing joint action by those involved in the change; and if flexibility of structures is maintained. Now, to a large extent, consciousness is an unknown. How can we enclose it in an established educational structure without betraying the very meaning of research on this unknown?

The two constants of recent research into educational change thus provide the basis for useful reflection on consciousness as a subject of study. These constants alert us to be careful. On one hand, the potential exists for denaturing the teachable content of consciousness study and reducing it to doctrine at the point of its integration into an educational system (whereupon it loses its meaning). On the other hand, the institutionalization of such studies cannot be conceived in structural terms alone: it must emerge from the freely expressed will to respect plural interpretive options. And the paradox of pluralism is that we can then no longer be certain the proposed academic change will reflect its initial goals. For instance, forces operating democratically could modify initial plans for "Consciousness Studies" programmes, or antidemocratic forces could take control of the academic change.

Language and consciousness

Consciousness studies may face a further danger: in the effort to describe the indescribable, researchers and teachers may be led to confuse their schemas of reality with the reality the schemas seek to represent. Moreover, from the moment one begins to work on consciousness, a subtle relationship is established between language and consciousness. Language indicates the effects of consciousness but does not have the property of being able to describe consciousness. Now, given that we conceptualize an area of exploration on the basis of the systematic use of language, our conceptualization cannot but schematize the reality of our experience using the vocabulary of prior conceptual frameworks. For instance, language can lead to the belief that one person has a given experience but that another does not, because the latter uses different language. The words used convey preconceptions, the shape ascribed to experience, but cannot convey experience itself.

The conceptual frameworks we use to translate our perception of reality have been the subject of quite a lot of cognitive psychology research applied to education. A conceptual framework implies, not only a specific relationship between language and consciousness, but also a specific relationship of the individual to the group that shares her or his language and experience. Individuals communicate by means of a language; but their communication relies as well on a set of implied practices that the members of a community consent to without (generally) writing them down or verbalizing them. When a community of thought is constituted, whatever its purpose (and learned communities are no exception to this rule), subtle processes of adjustment make for the imposition of certain key structural concepts on the group; as a result, individuals who do not subscribe to these premises will, by that

very fact, be excluded from the community. Thus the process of becoming aware soon translates into a language that serves as a regulatory tool in communication.

The same process gives rise to a doctrinal core that grows ever harder. That is, by reaching agreement on discursive constants and like behaviors, a community delimits its culture. Behavioral and linguistic likeness flow from moves that constrain conformity, features of the group or community members' interaction as they educate each other. Certainly, variation occurs among communities as to modes of inclusion and exclusion; but the adjustments in question here are an inherent and distinctive feature of communication and seem therefore to operate within all human groups. Their effect is to gradually regulate shared thinking, like-mindedness; to produce a frame of reference within which group members communicate and that rationalizes their behavior.

A given human group or community is differentiated from or opposed to other human groups or communities by its characterization. The principles that impose likeness within the group--for instance, a group of scholars or scientists--are the very principles that mark it off from the rest of the world. In a group, a hierarchy is imposed on implied values by processes of legitimation that make possible the conceptualization and intelligibility of the learning the group shares and conveys.

It cannot be said, however, that this shared work on language is an index of work on consciousness.

Thought groups and professionalization

Given these reflections, what is the possible educational future of consciousness studies? When a learned group with specific and novel interests enters the ambit of an educational world such as that of the university, its goals tend to take on the hue of professionalization. Professionalization is the process whereby a social group acquires legitimacy. It depends on the lawful imposition of culture-bearing arbitrary constraints that allow for the emergence and perpetuation of a discipline. Professionalization serves several goals: intellectual production for financial gain, the reproduction of knowledge, the delimitation and the implementation of practices, and the institutionalization of a certain kind of influence. I should like to invoke here the work of both P. Bourdieu and G. Paicheler. Professionalization is based on a claim to social privileges that follow on the conquest, expansion, and legitimation of a field of practices and research. The reproduction of privileged knowledge within an academic context fulfills goals relating to both power and money. The medieval mission of the university--which aimed at a universal knowledge that would unite the human being with nature--has been transformed in modern times into the segmentation of knowledge into units with trade value. At the present time, consciousness studies in any established form would inevitably partake of this ethos.

Institutionalizing consciousness studies would lead to professionalizing the discipline. Professionalization comes down to creating professionals. Professionals are people with acknowledged, specific spheres of competence, who can transform this competence into legitimized financial power. In all probability, what would happen next is that consciousness and/or the language of consciousness, once acknowledged via costly processes of social legitimation, would be transformed into material benefits enjoyed by those recognized as holders of a certain legitimate power. What is the presupposition on which the professionalization of consciousness studies could be founded? In all likelihood, the answer is: proof that verifiable standards can be applied to the growth of consciousness and provide for its reproducibility within an institutional context. We can draw a parallel with the birth of psychology as a discipline: the legitimation of any new discipline calls for a demonstration of its social usefulness and then for the prominently made claim that the only people capable of transmitting this new, legitimized knowledge are those who have passed through the newly established academic curriculum.

Rationalizing knowledge in order to reproduce it implies opening up a new market; after all, these new professionals have to find work. Professionals practicing in the field of consciousness would be people who earn money by applying what they've learned. They would thus enter into a social marketplace. To ensure this was not a marketplace for fool's bargains, these professionals would have to be able to offer something socially positive--otherwise, consciousness studies will only have served to produce and guarantee the proliferation of individuals with a false notion of their own social usefulness, in other words, social parasites.

But we lack criteria for the institutional evaluation of real progress in consciousness. Most often, we rely on whatever credibility we can give the language of others: it's hard to attest to effects of consciousness but easy to attest to linguistic effects. A real risk arises of confusing raised awareness (raised consciousness) with indoctrination and of equating effects of consciousness with the (more trivial) effects of learning, which in fact bear small relation to consciousness as defined by physics and applied sciences.

All this would amount to merely renaming something already in existence; the crucial elements, only now beginning to be broached, of knowledge of the unknown, knowledge that is difficult to formulate in words and not reducible to doctrine, would disappear from research efforts. Isn't that how faculties of theology boxed in the divine and faculties of psychology the soul? *Homo academicus*, incapable of leaving reality untouched by words, would feel obliged to conceptualize and hence to betray it, in order to convince others that s/he had understood it.

It is debatable whether the onset of consciousness can be reproduced by generalizable methods. On this score, in-depth reflection on the goals of "Consciousness Studies" is called for. It may be preferable for such studies to remain open to the clash of ideas and steer clear of any effort at professionalization. What if consciousness cannot submit to

education? Keeping consciousness studies within the realm of research may perhaps protect them for a time from being trivialized and from being turned into a tool for indoctrination.

Is consciousness reproducible?

Professional power rests on the legitimation and attestation of expertise. In the field of consciousness, then, what proofs of expertise may we look for? Certainly, consciousness is reproducible through procreation, if we assume that every new human being is conscious. But the creation of consciousness studies suggests some people are more conscious than others (they have a consciousness of consciousness) and that it is study that has made them conscious.

Indeed, this postulate derives from very old traditions whereby certain types of knowledge were transmitted from person to person without the necessary involvement of any institutional framework in the process of communication. Institutionalizing educational practice in consciousness studies suggests that methods of raising awareness can be reproduced. We tend to assume that things done on a modest scale in former times or in traditional societies can be writ large. We tend to assume that social and individual benefits will probably result. The premise of replicability must be carefully looked at, for it constitutes the logical basis (IF..., THEN....) for the academic institutionalization of consciousness studies.

When a positive social attribute is localized, we try to reproduce it to obtain a social gain. What are the attributes of consciousness? These attributes are being ascribed to consciousness because of observed energy-field effects; but observations to date do not allow for the inference that they have invariably beneficial effects. They do seem to exist, like the effects of other fields of energy (assuming they are indeed distinct from these other field effects), but it cannot be inferred that they will bring social benefits... except through an ideological proof.

Listening to certain practitioners of "consciousness effects" and learning about the studies on REG being conducted at Princeton by the PEAR Laboratory and the latest research in other universities, one concludes that the research results show marked constants in very few subjects. These rare subjects testify to how dependent the strength of the effects is upon spatio-temporal circumstances, their surroundings, their emotions, and the people present. While certain "measured" effects on REG have been obtained with subjects who have no special competence in the field, a pattern only becomes apparent over a large number of experiments (Jahn & Dunne, 1986). The patterns of effects of consciousness on REG among subjects with no special aptitude correspond, in any case, to individual profiles, a sign of how difficult it is to generalize in this field. But these patterns nevertheless suggest certain tendencies. If field effects of consciousness do exist but are produced by an ungraspable or at the very least unknown cause, is it not premature to begin teaching what we have not yet begun to learn?

One may wonder whether initiating schools of consciousness studies in ivy league universities is but the result of new search for funding. New students, new research, new money. Does the language of consciousness hide economical arguments ? In this period of short-cuts, one may ask whether those future students of consciousness studies will be sociocritically aware that they are perhaps destined to solve financial problems in the universities. The word consciousness may become the royal way of submitting masses to the new meanings of economy. Those higher politics of educational meaning would just express the trade fiction.

In regard, the premodern view of growth was simpler: while postmodern awakening may express mass delusion, the premodern search for consciousness was a personal mystery. In the premodern view, truth is idiosyncratic, because of the near non-teachability of the highest human goals. Because of the non-materiality of growth and its singularity, the unique adventure of individuation cannot be caught in the world of trade values and mass education as expressed in academic curricula. The curricularization of consciousness will banalize its education, and may restrict its meaning to the growth of our ignorance of what consciousness really means.

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